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SUBJECT: PORTUGAL SUPPORTS TOUGHER LINE ON BELARUS AT
GAERC, OTHERWISE SUPPORTS CONSENSUS

REF: SECSTATE 108064

Classified By: Dana M. Brown, Pol-Econ Officer, Embassy Lisbon
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Portuguese MFA officials Isabel Ferreira and Florbela Cardy stressed that Portugal and the EU agree with the main points of reftel demarche on Zimbabwe, Georgia, and Belarus. While Portugal plans to follow the EU consensus on most votes, Cardy did mention that Portugal and the Netherlands are currently in a minority pushing for a continuation of restrictive measures on Belarus. In addition to the reftel points, Cardy noted that Uzbekistan and Moldova would be on the GAERC agenda and offered a preview on Portugal's views. End summary.

¶2. (C) Zimbabwe. In response to reftel points on Zimbabwe, MFA Africa Deputy Isabel Ferreira told us that the EU was continuing to watch the power-sharing agreement closely to make sure that the distribution of power in key ministries establishes an actual coalition government. She said the EU would reaffirm its support for Mbeki as a mediator and release conclusions renewing calls for free movement for NGOs. While Ferreira noted that the UK and the Netherlands were pushing for additional EU restrictive measures, she said Portugal wanted to wait at least until the end of the month for further information on the ground reality. Ferreira said the European Commission would also announce ten million euros in aid to ease the humanitarian crisis at the GAERC meeting.

¶3. (C) Georgia. Turning to European issues, MFA Deputy EU Correspondent Florbela Cardy responded that the situation was stable in Georgia and that the European Monitoring Mission (EUMM) was going smoothly. High Representative Javier Solana sent a message out to EU member states noting that Russian forces had agreed to withdraw from South Ossetia and Abkasia by midnight on October 8, which Cardy mentioned was a positive signal. She did not have information on whether Portugal will be able to make a bilateral donation at the October 22 donors' conference, but offered to send further information when it becomes available. She predicted that the ministers would begin to review the EU's relationship with Russia -- a discussion that the French will take up again at the December EU Council meeting.

¶4. (C) Belarus. Portugal and the Netherlands are among the minority of member states pushing to maintain the visa ban and restrictive measures at this time. Cardy expressed the GOP's concern that member states are willing to reward the modest progress that Belarus has made too soon. Of the three measures that the EU sought, the Belorussians have only completed "about a half of one," Cardy concluded. She acknowledged that some EU partners feared that Belarus would move in Russia's direction without timely praise.

Nevertheless, Portugal believes this is not the right time to offer incentives for such modest progress.

¶5. (C) Uzbekistan. Cardy claimed that Portugal is not as concerned with Uzbekistan as Belarus, and would have agreed to vote just on conclusions, but the Netherlands pressed for a discussion. According to Cardy, having the EU relax some targeted measures would benefit private individuals and would serve as a modest gesture of goodwill. She assured us that no one was pushing to ease the arms embargo in place with Uzbekistan.

¶6. (U) Moldova. The foreign ministers plan to sign a declaration of intent to deepen relations with Moldova at next week's GAERC. Cardy mentioned that Moldova could be added as a European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) member and enjoy some free trade agreements with the EU bloc. The EU hopes this outreach will also serve to reinforce the impression that they are engaged on the frozen conflict in Transnistria.
STEPHENSON